

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



FOUNDED 1836

W A S H I N G T O N, D.C.

PROPOSALS

FOR ESTABLISHING A

RETREAT FOR THE INSANE,

TO BE CONDUCTED BY

29
GEORGE PARKMAN, M. D.

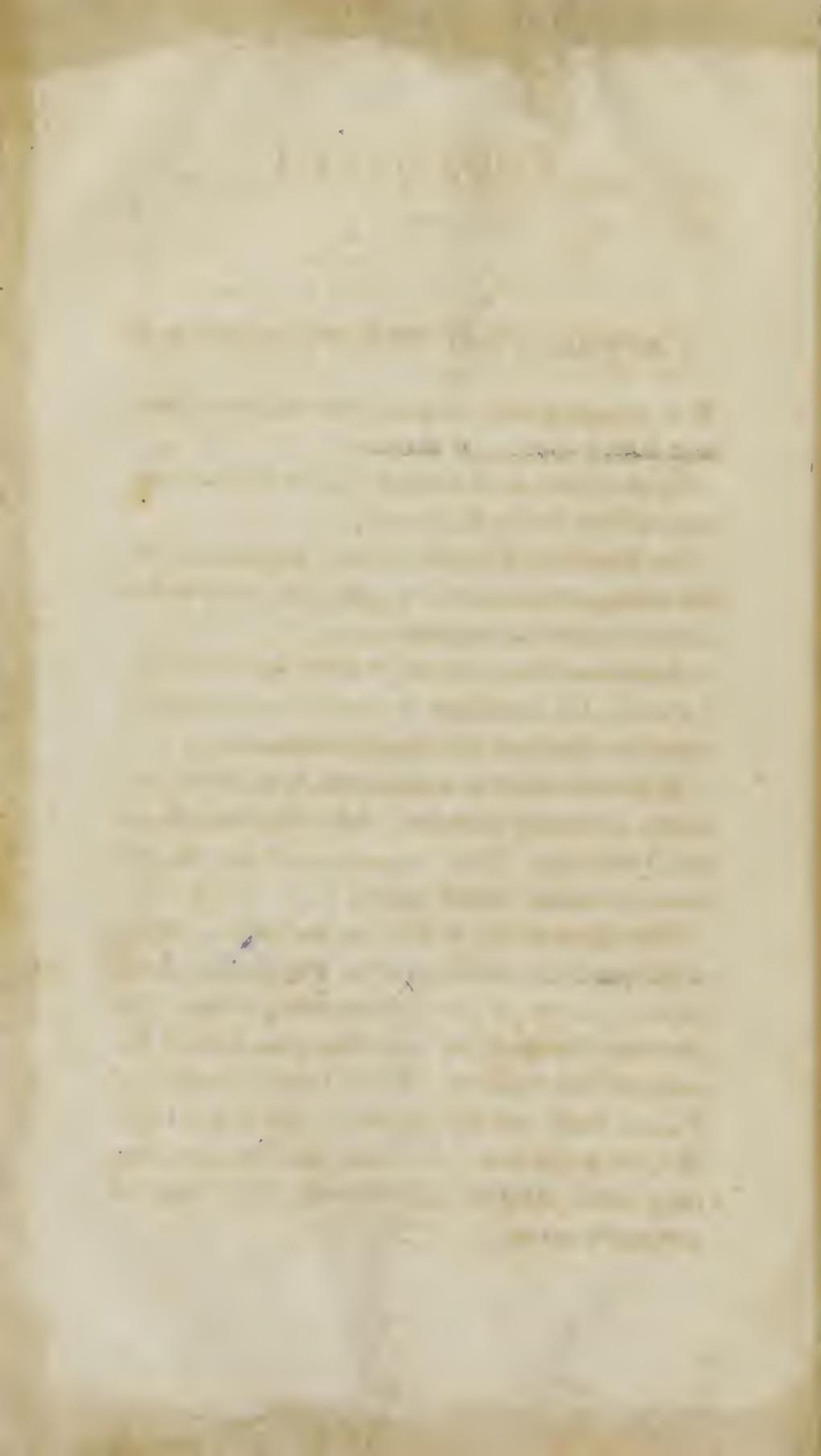
—
“Ces asiles des malheurs des mortels
Sont du Bon Dieu les meilleurs abris.”



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1814.



A RETREAT FOR INSANE PERSONS

Is to be established on one of the most delightful and retired spots, near Boston.

Application for admission into it may be made immediately to Dr. Parkman.

No time will be lost in making preparations for the accommodation of each applicant, as his or her circumstances may require.

Accommodations will be made for those patients, for whom the occasional or constant residence of a friend or attendant with them is adviseable.

Expenses will be proportioned to each patient's pecuniary situation, and to his demands on the Institution. The expenses will not exceed those in similar establishments.

The object of the Institution has been a subject of the particular attention of the Physician from the commencement of his professional pursuits. He has visited most of the establishments for the Insane of Our Country, of the British empire, of France, Italy and Switzerland; and he has formed such connexion with them, as will give him early information of improvements, which shall be adopted in them.

It is proposed to call the Establishment "the Retreat;" or by some name, which will not excite any unpleasant ideas.

It is hoped, that the mention of it will recall to the minds of those, who shall have resided in it, a place, where they have found a friend, indefatigable in his exertions to render them happy, and to restore them to usefulness.

To those, who may be candidates for residence in the Retreat, it is hoped, that it may be considered a delightful temporary abode, affording superior advantages for establishing health, or for diversion and respite from perplexing cares.

The arrangement of the house will resemble, as much as possible, that of a private residence, affording as many enjoyments of social life, as the circumstances of each patient may allow; so that the idea of a hospital, or of any thing like it, may not intrude itself.

The patient will be courteously received at the Retreat, as a stranger, and he shall not discover that his misfortune is known there, until maniacal extravagance demands his restraint.

The Physician will be assiduous in acquiring early knowledge of his patient, to meet with judgment the first sally of his disorder.

Every thing, relating to the Establishment, will be particularly directed by the Physician. No person will be employed in it, who is not com-

pletely dependant on him, and none shall have an opportunity of repeating a breach of duty.

The proposed Institution has not the means of extending its influence to objects of charity. It will be ever ready to second the views of the charitable. Should any sums be appropriated by individuals, or by publick bodies, for the Insane Poor, this Institution will receive them, under such conditions, as may answer the ends of the Donors.

General experience, in the treatment of insanity, has furnished the following results, which will be kept constantly in view, in the management of this Institution.

'Maniacs are under the influence of a disease which deprives them of responsibility; and frequently leads them to conduct, opposite to their character and dispositions. Their extravagances should be considered but as the impulses of an automaton, no more calculated to excite anger, than is a blow from a stone propelled by its gravity. To punish the misconduct, however extravagant, of a man, who avows his inability to govern his actions, would be cruel. Attempts to rectify errors, the absurdity of which he is ready to acknowledge and lament, would be of but little advantage.

That it is necessary to commence acquaintance with lunatics, by exhibition of strength, or appearance of austerity; that madness, in all its forms, is

capable of entire control, by excitement of fear, is an error, strengthened by indifference to the comforts of the Insane, and by having rendered coercion necessary by unkind treatment.

To detain maniacs in constant seclusion, and to load them with chains ; to leave them defenceless, to the brutality of underlings, on pretence of danger, from their extravagances ; to rule them with a rod of iron, as if to shorten their existence, already wretched ; is a superintendence, more distinguished for its convenience, than for its humanity or its success. If “oppression makes a wise man mad,” will stripes and injuries, for which the receiver knows no cause, make a mad man wise ; or will they exasperate his disease and excite his resentment ?

There are patients, who may be made to obey their attendants, with promptitude—to rise, to sit, to stand, to walk, or run at their pleasure, though expressed by a look only. Such obedience, and even the appearance of affection, we see in the poor animals, who are exhibited to gratify curiosity in natural history. But who can avoid reflecting, in observing such spectacles, that the readiness, with which the tiger obeys his master, is from treatment, at which humanity shudders ?

That the continual or frequent excitement of fear should “bid melancholy cease to mourn,” is an idea too absurd to require the refutation of practice. But there has been too much experience on

this subject ; hence we may, in a great degree, explain, why melancholy has been considered so much less susceptible of cure than mania. But where mild treatment has been adopted, a large portion of melancholy patients has recovered.

Maniacs, who have been brought to the Asylum, represented uncommonly furious, rendered so probably, by severity, have, on being received with affability, soothed by consolation and sympathy, and encouraged to expect a happier lot, subsided into a placid coolness, to which has succeeded rapid convalescence.

Those, who pursue the terrific system of management, should reflect on the awful responsibility attached to their conduct. But those only, who have had opportunities of observing, can conceive the difficulty of entirely subduing the vindictive feelings, which the inconsistent, but sometimes half-rational conduct of the patient often excites in the minds of ordinary attendants. To consider the insane, at the same time as brothers, and as mere automata ; to applaud all they do right ; and to pity, without censuring, whatever they do wrong, requires a habit of reflection, difficult to attain.

This Institution will aim to avoid every thing, which can excite or aggravate the fury or sadness of the patients ; to appear not to notice their extravagances ; to yield to their caprices, with apparent complacency ; to elude with dexterity their in-

considerate demands ; to draw them insensibly from the sorrow, or the error, which marks their disease ; to give them impulses, with such address as to impress them with the conviction that they originate with themselves ; to soothe them by kind treatment, consolatory language, and particularly by encouraging hope ; and to render all these means effective by dispassionate firmness. Coercion exerted towards the patients shall appear to be only a protecting and salutary restraint, the result of necessity, reluctantly resorted to, and commensurate with the violence or petulance it is intended to correct, avoiding, as far as possible, whatever irritates or degrades the feelings.

Such coercion seldom exasperates violence, or produces that feverish and sometimes furious irritability, in which the maniacal character is completely developed, and under which all power of self-control is lost. But, where fear is too much excited, and where it becomes the chief motive of action, it tends to contract the understanding, and to weaken the benevolent affections. It is determined, in this Establishment, to excite, as much as possible, the operation of superior motives ; and fear shall not be induced, but when a necessary object cannot otherwise be obtained.

The Institution will possess force calculated to master the extravagances of the patients, and to preclude the idea of resistance.

Insane persons generally possess a degree of control over their wayward propensities. This is often exercised before strangers. The patient is induced to support his consequence, by restraining those propensities, which, if indulged, would lessen the respect, he receives. Attention to this circumstance may be rendered exceedingly important, during the first part of a patient's residence in the Institution. The Physician will assiduously encourage every effort to self-restraint in his patients, so that habit may strengthen their power of controlling their disorder.

An important part of management with those who have been most happy in the treatment of Insanity, has consisted in giving full employment to the remaining faculties of the lunatic, and in engaging them about objects, opposite to their illusions.

The lost faculties often recover themselves, when an object is presented, calculated to fix the attention.

Indolence weakens the mind, and induces *ennui* and discontent. Salutary exercises and employments render the labourers cheerful, and fit them for repose at night.

In this institution, employments will be encouraged, by the prospect of recompense, or by other motives. The establishment will possess extensive enclosures, where those, whose circumstances will admit, may be engaged in gardening, &c.

The first ray of returning reason will be seized with avidity, and tenderly fostered.

Those apartments, in the establishment, which command open and cheerful scenery, will be allotted to melancholics, in preference to any other patients.

Attention will be given to prevent the contagious influence of acts of maniacal extravagance. Confirmed mania will never be exposed to the sight of patients, recently and perhaps transiently deranged. Ideotism will never be exposed to the other classes of patients : nor will any of the insane be exposed to the unfeeling curiosity of visitors.

In New England, but little ingenuity has been exerted to increase the comforts of the Insane, or to procure his recovery. He has, in many instances, been left to subsist on bread and water, and to lie on straw, chained in a dark, solitary and loathsome cell, experiencing no solicitude in his fate, and a victim of an idle and sometimes interested maxim, that "insanity is incurable." His personal liberty has been taken from him, perhaps by his nearest relative or dearest friend, whose occasional reproaches have wounded him deeply. The idea of being under restraint, in a place, where he perhaps considers himself master, is constantly irritating him ; and his distress is aggravated, by the brutality of his attendants. Rendered susceptible of the liveliest emotions, by morbid excitement of his nervous system, he gives himself up to all the extravagances of maniacal

fury, or sinks into the lowest depths of despondence and melancholy.

Many instances, in which the malevolent dispositions are apparent, may be traced to secondary causes, arising from the peculiar circumstances of the patient, or from the management.

A patient, confined at home, naturally feels resentment, when those, whom he has been accustomed to command, refuse to obey, or attempt to restrain him. We may attribute, in part, to similar causes, the indifference to the accustomed sources of dometick pleasure, the disgust towards the tenderest connexions, which are frequently early symptoms of insanity. The maniac is frequently unconscious of his disease. He is unable to account for the change in the conduct of his friends. They appear to him cruel, disobedient, and ungrateful. His disease aggravates their conduct in his view, and leads him to unfounded suspicions. Hence, the estrangement of his affections may frequently be the consequence of either the proper and necessary, or of the mistaken conduct of his friends towards him. Yet, the existence of the benevolent affections, in such cases, is often evidenced, by the patient's attachment to those, who have the immediate care of him, and who treat him with judgment and humanity. Even in those instances where the ingenious humanity of the Superintendent fails to conciliate, and the dis-

ease changes the aspect of nature, and represents all mankind as the leagued enemies of the patient, the existence of the social affections is often evidenced, by his attachment to some inferior animals.

In most cases of insanity, originating in deviation from virtue, the degree of morbid effect, on the intellect, is proportioned to the consciousness of shame, and to the remaining virtue of the victim.

It has been said, by one, who has been a long time conversant with the Insane, I have nowhere seen fonder husbands, more affectionate parents, more pure and exalted patriots, than in the Lunatic Asylum, during their intervals of calmness and reason. A man of sensibility may daily witness there scenes of indescribable tenderness, and of most estimable virtue.

The Superintendent of an Asylum for the Insane should possess mildness, and firmness of manners, the vigilance of an affectionate friend, knowledge of the mind, zeal and sagacity in the discharge of the duties of his office.'

These high qualifications will be the constant aim of the Superintendent of the Proposed Institution. He is encouraged by the support and advice of his Professional Fathers.

The Trustees of the Mass. General Hospital have individually expressed Their warmest approbation of this plan of establishing a Retreat for the Insane, and Their best wishes for its success.

Med. Hist.

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